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Celebrate Creativity

NEWSLETTER OF THE NAGC CREATIVITY NETWORK

View from the Chair

Another year has gone through its cycles, and we're opening a new school year again here in the United States. Starting school at the end of summer-beginning of Fall is such an ingrained thing to most of us who grew up that way, that we almost think the two are linked by some deep, integral bond, rather than co-occurring simply because of our nation's long-ago agrarian majority. When I was a little girl, my family moved to Australia one June, after my kindergarten year. Imagine my surprise to find out that the kids there were halfway through their school year!

Every time I take a moment to ponder almost any relatively pedestrian idea, like school starting in the Fall, it makes me wonder, "What if...?" That question – what if? – is the springboard to so many creative thoughts, further questions, and new ideas. And wondering – what if? – is such a simple thing to do, such a natural thing to do. Wondering, speculating – it's something that pre-schoolers do constantly. It's how we are urged to think when we are engaged in problem solving. It's the first step in opening up our minds to new possibilities.

A longtime friend of mine, Karen Kendig, is involved with developing and teaching online modules in gifted education through the Colorado Department of Education. The one-credit courses were developed with regular classroom teachers in mind. One that Karen recently finished writing is a course on Creativity. Knowing my interest in the field, she asked me to look the course content over as it was being developed. I love it – it covers the basics, leads teachers into exploring the concept for themselves, asks them to apply it to their teaching and planning, and impresses upon them the importance of creative thinking in the development of giftedness.

Karen taught the Creativity module this summer to a variety of teachers across the state. When I asked her how it had gone, she looked at me with a puzzled expression and said, "It's really strange. It seems as if, no matter what I do as the instructor, some people just don't get it. They don't have any idea what creativity is." As she clarified for me, she gave examples of teachers who completely failed to grasp the essence of the course. "When I asked some of them to give examples of questions that would encourage kids to think divergently," Karen reported, "they would respond, 'Why would I want to do that?'" I was as baffled as she, and we ended up laughing as we thought about how improbable that scenario would have seemed to us when we were first looking at the course content. How could someone possibly *not get it*?

Creativity can only happen when we "open wide." That is a scary proposition to many people; it certainly must have been for Karen's students who didn't "get it." They *couldn't* get it, because they felt they had to stay closed. I have to remind myself that for the mind to be open enough to question assumptions, to look in dusty corners for solutions, to ask "what if...?" the person has to be unafraid to open wide.

As you go about your life this school year – teaching, parenting, administrating, writing, counseling – whatever you do, ask yourself, "What if I could help someone become brave enough to open wide and learn to ask 'what if?'"



Wendy Leader is the Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Programming for Mesa County School District 51 in Grand Junction, CO. She earned her Ph.D. in Special Education – Education of the Gifted at the University of Arizona in Tucson and her Master's degree in Teaching the Gifted from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, CO. She has taught elementary school in both regular and gifted magnet classrooms and finds that teaching adults is nearly as rewarding, but you don't get any presents. She is passionate about making sure that all students have opportunities to learn about and use creativity in schools as part of their instruction in all types of thinking skills. She wonders what our world would be like if everyone was proficient – or advanced – in higher-level thinking skills.

Feeding the Creative Spirit of Gifted Learners

by Joan Franklin Smutny

For many gifted students, the urge to create is as powerful as the urge to learn academically. The two go hand in hand. Without creativity, academic study becomes inert and students cannot contribute to what they're learning in any significant way. On the other hand, without advanced learning, creativity becomes limited in its applicability due to insufficient knowledge or skill. Starko has said that "individuals need knowledge in order to be creative; finding problems of increasing sophistication demands increased understanding of the domains in which the problems are found" (1995, p. 126). The tendency to separate academics and creativity in the schools ignores the fact that gifted students often do both simultaneously. As anyone who works in gifted education knows, the brightest minds in our schools will never be content to simply follow the tracks laid by others. They will want to lay track of their own.

When the teacher gave Jerry double-digit numbers to add, she included ones that required him to "carry over." After some time, she found him scribbling all over the page. He had invented four different ways of adding the figures together and then said, "There's a way to add from left to right instead of right to left. Here's $97 + 88$. I put down 170 first because it's 90 plus 80 (in the tens column). Then I add up the ones, which is 15, and I put that under the 170 (he lined it up). Then I can tell it's 185...really quick!" Jerry just started first grade.

Without formal art lessons, fifth grader Marta taught herself how to draw and paint. Her ability in visual art was not only one of execution, but of perception. Standing in front of a series of paintings on the wall, she waved the teacher to come closer, declaring that she knew how the paintings "worked." Looking at a Van Gogh print, she shared her thoughts on design, light, and color. During the weeks that followed, her teacher would often find her, early in the morning before school started, studying each painting from a new angle.

Jerry's flexible reasoning and Marta's artistry are both examples of the creative qualities that naturally emerge when gifted students have the freedom to embrace this dimension of themselves. The importance of creativity becomes apparent when we look closely at the circumstances in which gifted students reap the most benefits intellectually and emotionally. Almost always, they involve situations where high intellectual demand and creativity work together and where students apply their mastery of a subject (gained through advanced learning) to an open-ended assignment. This assignment may entail different kinds of mental processes—divergent thinking, artistry, invention, and intuition, or the keen "sensing" abilities that guide the earliest discoveries of gifted children.

It might be helpful here to list some of the most important benefits of creativity for high-ability learners.

- **Through creativity and the arts, gifted children make strong, personal connections with the subjects they're learning.** Gifted students experience a shift from passive receiving to active engagement because of its demand on individual thinking, intuiting, reasoning, analyzing, and imagining.

- **Students make discoveries.** Whether a teacher designs an open-ended inductive reasoning process or uses art media to inspire a poetic composition, the creative dimension stimulates completely new ways of thinking and enables gifted students to innovate and originate.
- **Students with different learning styles can engage in higher-level thinking.** Because of the wide range of processes involved and materials used, creativity can more fully address a wider range of student learning styles and also differences related to socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.
- **Students can develop a sense of artistry and depth of feeling.** Through regular exposure to the arts and the creative process, gifted children focus and revel in their keen sensibilities, exploring such phenomena as the beauty of numbers, the dazzling array of intricate patterns in nature, or the richness of imagery and meaning in stories or poems.

It should be pointed out that gifted students can only experience these benefits if the classroom environment fosters the creative process. Research has proved that in its influence on motivation and creative expression, the classroom environment plays a central role in the degree to which high-ability students can become independent, innovative, imaginative thinkers (Amabile, 1996; Hennessey, 2004). When *extrinsic* pressures such as competition, evaluation, and external reward outweigh all other concerns, students tend to approach the learning process as a means to an end, undermining creativity and self-determination (Hennessey, 2004). They need experience in making their own contribution to the subjects they're learning. This can only happen, however, when the climate of the classroom nurtures the *intrinsic* motivations of gifted students (inner curiosity, imagination, and passion) and fosters their growth and development.

Originally inspired by E. Paul Torrance's *Why fly?* (1995), the following guidelines provide helpful assistance for teachers who wish to awaken the creative force in their gifted students:

Preparing the soil---

- Openly share your own creative passions with your students.
- Fill the classroom with art, music, and a rich variety of enticing supplies.
- Design work spaces that beckon the creative muse in your students.
- Applaud originality, whenever and wherever expressed.
- Protect students from saboteurs: criticism, censure, premature judgment.
- Celebrate risk-taking and bold endeavor.

Planting the seeds---

- Awaken imagination and artistic sensibilities through example and exposure to creative people and their works.
- Create open time for creative exploration.
- Share jewels of wisdom about the creative process.
- Point out the hidden, less traveled paths; warn against set patterns.
- Celebrate the beginning steps of children's own creative process.

Feeding the Creative Spirit Continued...

Watering and feeding---

- Design activities that engage the whole child: touching, feeling, imagining, listening, sensing, composing, combining, writing, improvising, constructing, molding, shaping.
- Provide for advanced learning in a variety of fields.
- Assign work that requires creative and imaginative thinking.
- Nurture boldness in vision and endeavor.

Weeding and growing---

- Teach strategies for *constructive* criticism and evaluation.
- Impart coping skills to deal with peer judgment, crippling perfectionism, and frustration with the creative process.
- Support students' trust in their own creative power.
- Give them opportunities to correct errors, refine visions, re-write, re-create, improve, elaborate.
- Find venues for students to show/demonstrate/perform/exhibit for real audiences in the community.

A final note

I would like to conclude this article with a poem from a sixth grader. The joy and satisfaction a child feels when released from restrictions, and encouraged to step boldly into the world in a way not possible before are unmistakable. For a gifted students, this freedom opens the door to extraordinary achievement and the anticipation of adventures yet to be made.

Freedom

A crystal lake, surface smooth as glass,
Suffocated by the foreshadowing mountains.
White strips of clouds, claw marks, tear tracks, decorate the sky.
Shadows reflect on the desolate lake.
Stones at the bottom of the pit look longingly,
Wishing for the mountain to shift, for an open road.
Wishing for freedom.

---Alexandra, grade 6

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Joan Franklin Smutny is founder and director of the Center for Gifted and is a recipient of the NAGC Distinguished Service Award for outstanding contribution to the field of gifted education. She directs programs for thousands of gifted children in the Chicago area annually. She also teaches creative writing in many of these programs as well as courses on gifted education for graduate students at the university. She is editor of the Illinois Association for Gifted Children Journal, contributing editor of *Understanding Our Gifted*, and a regular contributor to the *Gifted Education Press Quarterly*. Smutny has authored, coauthored, and edited many books on gifted education for teachers and parents, including *Manifesto of the Gifted Girl* (Royal Fireworks Press, 2010), *Differentiating for the Young Child, Second Edition* (Corwin Press, 2010), *Igniting Creativity in Gifted Learners, K-6* (Corwin Press, 2009), *Acceleration for Gifted Learners, K-5* (Corwin Press, 2007), *Reclaiming the Lives of Gifted Girls and Women* (Royal Fireworks Press, 2007), and *Designing and Developing Programs for Gifted Children* (2003). Other recent credits include *Underserved Gifted Populations* (2003), *Gifted Education: Promising Practices* (2003), and *Stand Up for Your Gifted Child* (2001). In 2005, she received the Presidents' Award from the California Association for Gifted for significant contributions to gifted education.

2010 Torrance Legacy Creative Writing Awards

Hundreds of students from the U.S. and Singapore participated in the 2010 Torrance Legacy Creative Writing Awards in two basic areas, poetry and stories. Poetry submissions responded to either "The Celebration of Life" or "What Do You See in Life and How Do You Respond to It?" Short stories responded to one of the following creative themes, "Building Sand Castles," "Crossing Out Mistakes," or "Listening to Smells." The winners of both poems and stories will be announced shortly through National Association for Gifted Children, Scholastic Testing Service, Torrance Center for Creativity and Talent Development, National Association for Gifted Children--Creativity Network, and The Center for Gifted.

This is the second year the Torrance Legacy Creative Writing Awards has been offered. Its intent is to celebrate the legacy of educators and creativity pioneer, Dr. E. Paul Torrance, author of more than 2,000 tests, articles, and books. Students from all over the country, and, for this year, Singapore, representing grades 4-12, will each receive a certificate of participation. Winners will receive a publication including their entries. First, Second, and Third place winners will receive a book to honor their contribution of excellence. For further information, please contact Scott Rich at creativity@ststesting.com or contact Joan Franklin Smutny at 847-256-1220 or joanfsm@aol.com.

Little Things Can Stop Creativity

by Robert Alan Black

No money can stop a creative project.

No resources can stop a creative project.

No support can stop a creative project.

Yes, major things or forces can stop creativity. Yet when we look at the history of invention or in general the history of new ideas we can discover that these major forces truly do not stop the devoted, committed, dedicated, creative person.

No money, resources, support did not stop:

- Ghandi
- Mother Teresa
- Charles Goodyear
- Harriet Tubman (underground railroad during the Civil War)
- Henry Ford
- Chester Carlson (inventor of the Xerox process)
- nor many others from the distant or recent past.

One key difference for them was their determination. Yes eventually money, resources and support came or was acquired. They enabled the creative person to take their idea and turn it into a larger and larger solution.

Yet the little things are what stop most of us from utilizing our creativeness long before we get to tapping the big resources for future giant success or breakthrough.

While reading Alexander Lockhart's book: POSITIVE CHARGES, recently I came across the following item:

#79

Understand there is only a letter difference between change and chance.

It got my attention as another small thing that often stops my creativeness or the creativeness of others I know and work with.

Being creative produces change. Many to most people resist change or at least resist being "changed". Being creative often requires that we take a chance or chances. Being creative requires that we venture into unknown territory and chance failure.

To be more creative we need to accept change and chance and that with either the other will occur. If you change something you take a chance of potential failure. If you take a chance change will normally be the result. Examine the changes your ideas will produce. Explore and test the chances you will be taking. Do not change or chance stop you.

About a 18 months ago I had an aha that came from another small difference. While teaching Fundamentals of Marketing courses for the American Management Associations one issue that I stressed, similar to many presenters, speakers, and professors; was that as Americans we tend to be REACTIVE rather than ACTIVE or better yet PROACTIVE. An emphasis and purpose of marketing and marketing plans is to help people take charge and be PROACTIVE. Often becoming PROACTIVE requires many paradigm shifts for individuals, departments and entire corporations or even industries.

The "Aha" I had was a simple change. Instead of being REACTIVE, simply rearrange one letter in the word and become CREA TIVE or creative. I have always found it much easier for people to be creative than for them to change and stop being reactive to become proactive.

Still another simple change has to do to a major barrier to success or creativeness. That is "limitation".

I can't be creative I can't draw. I can't sing. I can't dance. I can't understand computer software. I can't. I can't. I can't.

If you are a fan or reader of motivational books you no doubt have read the quote always accredited to Henry Ford....

"If you say you can or you say you can't, in either case you will be right in the end" (paraphrased)

Making the philosophic choice could be a simple chance that would greatly affect your creativeness.

That is not the simple change I am referring to related to "limitation".

Look at the word "limitation". It has 10 letters. 9 of the letters are the root cause why so many people are not creative. The 9 letters spell "imitation". Too often we copy, mimic, reproduce and do not think for ourselves and create.

Still another simple change can be discovered by examining the word "RECREATION". Back up in linguistic history and respell the word as it would have been originally spelled as a hyphenated word...

RE-CREATION

Re creation. Creating again.

Many highly creative people discover that when they experience "a blank wall", "writer's block", "creative staleness" or other forms of creative blocks that if they simply stop and take time to recreate they will then be able to re-create and re-tap their creativeness and move on.

Graham Wallas referred to the space between the second and third stages of his creative process as a good time to relax and play or recreate. By doing this you allow your subconscious to work on the challenge and provide you an aha or enable you to be in a state that makes you open to discovering an aha.

Oz Swallow in 1978 shared a simple

change that has major implications and effect on the creativeness of people. One night as a group of 100 or more people crowded into a small classroom at Buff State College during the Annual CPSI meeting, Oz encouraged us to... "Change the metaphors in your life."

He followed by explaining that all words in all languages (nouns, adjectives, and adverbs used as adjectives and possibly verbs) are metaphors. They are not the thing or action but rather a word referring to your interpretation of it. Therefore he suggested that we examine the words we use. See them as metaphors. Then change our metaphors. Or change our definitions.

An example I have used with students from elementary school to college and with participants in workshops of a range of ages was the one

"I Can't Draw"!

First we clearly defined the word draw as making lines, shapes, marks, or shaded areas. In turn the results could be used to represent existing or imaginary things. Then we would redefine the act of drawing as the making of lines, shapes, marks, or shaded areas with materials such as pencils, pens, chalk, crayons, etc using our hands, feet, arms, teeth, etc to hold them.

The simple change in this case is establishing a realistic definition and comparison. Most people tend to compare themselves and their actions or skills with the "giants" in the particular field such as art, music, dance, engineering, etc.

To learn to draw is a simple act.

To learn to draw at the level of a major artist is generally not.

Still one more simple change that can be discovered by examining the word we use. Most to all of us have problems with daily communication. The root cause for most of us is poor listening, either on our part or the other person's.

The change. To improve your communication listen. To better listen simply re-arrange the letters for the answer.
listen becomes silent!

Therefore to improve your creativeness.
..

1. Accept that being creative will produce change and that simple change often will produce creativity.

2. Accept that creativity requires some chance. Continually work at taking bigger and bigger chances. One small step at a time.

3. Work at not reacting and instead work at creating.

4. Work at reminding yourself over and over "I Can, I Can, I Can" and ask

"How Might I or How Might We So That I Can or We Can?"

5. Stop imitating. Look for new ways for yourself. Examine the principle or main idea behind successful creative ideas and adapt them rather than simply adopting or imitating them.

6. Take time to recreate: relax, play a game, have fun at least for awhile.

7. Look for the metaphors that are stopping you and change them or your definitions for them.

8. Take time to truly listen to others, yourself, nature, your problems. Learn from Eero Saarinen, famous Finnish and American architect...

"The solution lies within the problem. Continue looking it will tell you."

Look for your own "small changes" that will release and expand your creativity and creativeness.

Being creative is your choice!

In 1976 Alan met Bob Eberle, creator of SCAMPERTM at a Gifted Education Conference, who convinced him he needed to go to CPSI, the Creative Problem Solving Institute in Buffalo, New York. In 1977 he traveled in 24 countries throughout Europe, UK, Eastern Europe and Egypt. Then in 1978 at his first CPSI he walked into a room where Sid Shore did a session titled: What's Good About It?! and became hooked on creative thinking tools and has been ever since for 32 years. Alan has written and co-written over 30 books focused on creative thinking and creative thinking tools and has had over 500 articles published in newspapers, magazines, journals, newsletters, blogs and ezines. Last year he did 4 live webinars on creative thinking. Since 1976 he has given over 3500 keynote speeches, breakout sessions, 1/2 to full-day workshops, 3 to 7 day training programs and university courses on developing creative skills of leading, communicating, teaming, thinking and problem solving in 40+ US states and 40+ countries around the globe on 6 continents. Since 1997 he has been creating and sharing Cre8ng Challenges, exercises and tools for expanding, enriching and reawakening creative thinking skills. Among his books are Broken Crayons: Break Your Crayons and Draw Outside the Lines, Ooops!, We Are...?!, two co-authored training exercise manuals with Dr. Arthur van Gundy, Exploring Creativity with Dr. Kobus Neethling and Rache Rutherford and has had his exercises included annually for over a decade each year in Pfeiffer & Jones Training and Leadership Manuals. His working life has included working in 8 professions: television news writing, architecture, interior designer, graphics and signage design, college professor of design, cartoonist, freelance writer, speaker and consultant. Alan did his doctorate in the teaching of creative thinking tools with Dr. E. Paul Torrance. For nearly 30 years he has been a presenter/leader at CPSI and at ACA for 10 years and served on the ACA Board as coordinator of international connection and for 12 years has been a presenter at Dr. Kobus Neethling's International Creativity Conference - ACRE and 6 years with his creativity in education conferences. Most of the time now he travels the world like Johnny Appleseed promoting the development of Cre8ngTM Workplaces from the front and rear door to the top floor. So far he has traveled to 77 countries and 49 US states

“BEST PRACTICE” EDUCATIONAL METHODS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVE EMINENCE

by Dr. Vanessa Ewing & Dr. Laura Ann Ganus

What do Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey have in common? It may appear that their similarities are limited to the obvious that they are wealthy and accomplished “celebrities” within their chosen fields. But their similarities do not end there. Both were under-challenged, bored, and unfulfilled during their school years (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004). Typically the devastating result of this type of educational experience is that students may drop out of school, quit following their passions, and lead life without ever reaching their potential. As we know, this is not what happened to Bill Gates or Oprah Winfrey. How did they overcome an under-challenging and unfulfilling school experience and what can we learn about helping others that may be having a similar experience?

They were the lucky ones. Oprah Winfrey was fortunate enough to go to a more rigorous and challenging school through grade acceleration and enrollment options she was given within her public school system (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004). While Bill Gates continued to be bored by his classes all the way through his college career at Harvard, he was lucky to enter into a field where hands-on experimentation, and small passionate groups of pioneers spurred one another to action. But we must ask ourselves how many that were destined for creative eminence were denied the opportunity due to a system that was broken.

Though Howard Gardner (2006) discussed the critical importance of a “creating mind” –putting forth new ideas, questions, and answers to problems, our schools are doing little to foster this type of thinking. We know that those that have major accomplishments and discoveries also have creative minds, yet our current educational system often punishes that creativity. “Schools kill creativity,” says Sir Ken Robinson, renowned author and speaker. Schools do not just ignore creative and divergent thinking. Unfortunately, they often actively discourage it, or kill it. As Robinson noted, children start out thinking in very unique ways, marching to their own drummer. After being in school most stop feeling and acting creative.

Our teachers can do much to undermine creatively gifted children. Teachers reward convergent thinking, with students coming to the same specific and pre-determined, “correct” conclusion about a posed problem as others. E. Paul Torrence discussed how we often insist students do things the “right way.” We want children to be realistic. By doing such things, children are discouraged from creative fantasy, curiosity, and non-conformity, all essential ingredients in creativity.

The Importance of a Supportive Educational System for the development of Creative Eminence

Research continues to show the importance of the early developmental years (Belsky, 2006). One notable early childhood approach offers fertile ground for the development of creative eminence. The Italian philosophy of early childhood education in Reggio Emilia, Italy is a generator of creative thinking (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998). This philosophy encourages exploration, curiosity, and non-conformity—key ingredients in the development of creative thinking.

The Reggio Emilia philosophy encourages sustained child interest in areas of passion through emergent curriculum and long-term projects. The children are engaged and challenged in divergent thinking experiences integrated in project work, which encompasses all areas of the curriculum. For example, one notable project from Reggio Emilia is the “Amusement Park for Birds” in which a group of preschool-aged children at La Villetta School designed and constructed an amusement park for birds. Children initially drew their ideas about fountains and how they thought they worked, constructed waterwheels out of various materials and tested their contraptions, built bird houses, engaged in bird watching, used hoses and water pipes to create a lake for the birds and finally hosted the grand opening of the park with the induction from the town mayor. The children were actively engaged, energetic, and thoughtful throughout their project work. This project is just one example of how long-term passion projects can stimulate child creativity and interest.

In addition, a multitude of learning styles are supported through the development of the hundred languages of children, a metaphor to help us educators think about all the different ways children learn and express their thinking. Each infant, toddler and preschool center has an *atelier* or art studio, staffed with an *atelierista*, an art studio teacher trained in the visual arts, who assists children in developing their expressive capabilities. The art studios provoke children to express their ideas and thinking by using clay, wire, drawing, painting, light, movement and the use of diverse tools such as chisels, cameras, pulleys, and brushes.

Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the philosophy, believed that children have the right to imagine and to think creatively. These early childhood centers utilize materials that offer functional freedom, allowing children to decide the identity and purpose of the material. Natural materials such as wood,⁶

shells, seeds, leaves, and rocks are used with the children. Educators in Reggio Emilia also tap into a wealth of materials housed at Remida Centers—warehouses of unwanted recyclables such as wire, tubing, paper products, etc. The use of functional free materials in imaginative play, in contrast to commercially-produced toys, allow children to think creatively and express themselves using multiple forms of representation (Eisner, 1992).

Children have passions and strong interests that should be fostered by our educational system. Use of Malaguzzi's ideas including Remida Centers, sustained interest projects, and trained art studio teachers are all important to developing creative eminence across our curriculum, not just in early childhood. We must make sure to allow students time to be immersed in their passions, quitting when they are done rather than holding them to a strict, regimented, and segmented schedule (Lovecky, 2010).

There are a myriad of other ways to create experiences that encourage divergent, unique, out-of-the-box thinking. We can ask students their ideas for product improvements or new products or inventions. We can pose questions that allow for more than one correct answer. Davis (2004), renowned expert in the field of creativity, noted that although many teaching methods focus on linear, step-by-step methods of writing and student work projects, many creative children think in complex webs or connections. We can also allow these children to illustrate their thinking or writing through webs, circular patterns, or other methods that match their style of learning better.

By creating an educational system that celebrates innovative answers to questions, sustained student interest in areas of passion, and a variety of learning styles, we will help foster creative eminence in the next generation of students. The success of Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey in their respective fields reminds us of the importance of challenging young students and keeping their curiosity alive.

“Creative people need something beyond talent and encouragement to drive them to achieve. They need something to transform a hobby or casual interest into a consuming, passionate calling” (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, p. 345, 2004). As educators it is our duty to be that something beyond, utilizing “best practice” educational methods to help our students develop creatively.

Dr. Vanessa Ewing is a founder and former head of school for Broomfield Academy, helping children become exceptional, accelerated, and creative students. She has taught gifted and special education to children ages four to eighteen and works with college students in teacher education programs in the areas of psychology and giftedness at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. In her spare time, Vanessa enjoys spending time with her husband, newborn son Thomas, and golden retriever. She also enjoys taking art classes, reading biographies, and traveling.

Dr. Laura Ann Ganus is adjunct faculty at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs where she teaches graduate courses in gifted and talented education and curriculum and instruction. She is also adjunct faculty at Metropolitan State College of Denver and Colorado Mountain College where she teaches undergraduate courses in teacher preparation, specifically early childhood education. Her current research has focused on the Reggio Emilia philosophy, specifically focusing on the expressive arts. She holds a Ph.D. and M.A. from the University of Denver in curriculum and instruction.

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Book Reviews

by Suzanna E. Henshon, Ph.D.

Freaky Monday
by Mary Rodgers and Heather Hach
(HarperCollins, 2009)

Have you ever considered what it would feel like to switch places with another person? In her 1972 classic, *Freaky Friday*, Mary Rodgers enchanted young readers with the story of a young girl who switches places with her mother. Thirty-seven years later, she returns with a co-writer, Heather Hach, to write another fun account of a girl who switches places with her teacher.

In *Freaky Monday*, Hadley is a serious student who spends most of her free time studying. She has perfect attendance, and she's never missed a page of reading. But one day Hadley forgets to write a book review of *To Catch a Mockingbird*. Suddenly Hadley is worried about her academic future; what happens if she isn't accepted at Stanford University? Meanwhile, Ms. Pitt enjoys working with her students but never has time for fun; she's more likely to be grading papers than out on a date or shopping. Will these two young women ever have fun?

In an instant, Hadley changes bodies with Ms. Pitt. Soon Hadley discovers that being a teacher is more difficult than she ever expected; she has lectures to give, papers to grade, and fellow teachers to get along with. It isn't easy surviving a classroom filled with eighth graders or chaperoning a dance. But Hadley also has the chance to become an observer of her own life; she wants to have a more balanced life - a junior high experience filled with friendships, dances, and homework. And Hadley is

also shocked to discover that the boy of her dreams, Zack, finds her attractive. With baited breath, Hadley can't wait to change back to her own body in time for the school dance. In this fun and creative story, young readers will fall into the voice of Hadley, who is entertaining, witty, and a little nerdy; the storyline is creative because it makes students contemplate what it would feel like to change bodies with a teacher for a few days. *Freaky Monday* is a fun read for students of all ages and highly recommended.

The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary
by Jeff Kinney
(Abrams Books, 2010)
ISBN 978-0-8109-9616-8

How does a book become a movie? What creative processes are involved in transforming a hit novel into a great film?

The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary explores these creative processes in detail. Young readers will discover how a favorite book has become a film through the dynamic talents of many people, including a director, actors, stage crew, set designers, etc. While writing a book is an individual process, making a movie requires a large budget and a huge cast of people.

Readers will see how Greg Heffley emerged upon the page, the product of Jeff Kinney's imagination. Greg's character evolved over time; writing the first book took several years. When *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* was picked up by a Hollywood studio, the director made important decisions about how to bring the novel to life on

the silver screen. Readers will glimpse pages of the script and see how the director found the perfect actor to fill the role of notable characters. The child actors read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* carefully - and even wrote essays in the perspective of their characters.

Young readers will see the film emerge before their very eyes. They'll learn everything from how to film a scene to how to select a setting; they will even see how filmmakers designed the infamous piece of cheese that adds a special flavor to this story. Readers will learn how actors step into character, developing personalities that fit their characters. Most importantly, readers will see the painstaking details that are required in filming this book - from the school yearbook to the inside of the principal's office to the classroom where the dramatic scenes take place.

Reading through this book, I discovered an interesting fact; not every novel can translate directly to a movie. Several scenes are omitted from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, and another scene (the mother-son dance) is added for comedic effect. When a book is translated from the page to the screen, it is inevitable that some changes will be made; after all, the director's vision will not always align perfectly with the written word. In this case, Thor Freudenthal's creative vision has transformed a hit book into a movie that will appeal to millions of fans. Young readers can read about this transformative process in this well-written and informative movie guide. 8
The Fabled Fourth Graders of Aesop

Elementary School
by Candace Fleming
(Yearling, 2007)

What would it be like to attend Aesop Elementary School? In this delightful book, the fourth graders at Aesop Elementary are without a teacher just before school reopens in September. No one wants to teach a precocious, high energy group of students until Mr. Jupiter steps in at the last minute.

This novel is a series of short stories about the students and teachers of Aesop Elementary School. In the final pages of each chapter, readers will discover a moral or lesson - just like in the original fables. Candace Fleming's format is creative because she doesn't have a central protagonist; young readers will discover a myriad of perspectives - from the lunch monitor, Bertha Bunz, to the third grade teacher, Mr. Frost, within the pages of this book. In each chapter, readers will watch with interest as a character makes mistakes - and learns from his or her failings. Gifted educators will enjoy watching the adventures of Stanford Binet, Mrs. Struggles, Miss Fairchild, and Mrs. Grossinger. The Fabled Fourth Graders of Aesop Elementary School features interesting characters, complex adults, and a series of mini-stories that are fun to read. After reading this book, students might be motivated to read Aesop's fables, the inspiration behind these fun stories.

A River of Words: The Story of
William Carlos Williams
by Jen Bryant
Illustrations by Melissa Sweet
Eerdmans Books for Young Readers
(2008)

In this biography of William Carlos Williams, young readers will watch the creative process unravel through Jen Bryant's elegant prose and Melissa Sweet's compelling illustrations. Poet William Carlos Williams (1883-1963) is best known for writing "The Red Wheelbarrow" and "This is Just to Say." But he was also an accomplished doctor and authored 48 books, including the Pulitzer Prize

winning Pictures from Brueghel. This book provides readers with a sense of the poet and man simultaneously.

William Carlos Williams grew up in Rutherford, New Jersey, where he loved to wander through woods and fields. Willie watched everything; he enjoyed resting and relaxing by the Passaic River. As a teenager, Willie studied poetry; the shifting rhythms reminded him of the river's music. At first Willie imitated traditional formats, but soon he wrote about ordinary things - plums, wheelbarrows, and weeds. Finally he allowed his poetry to find its shape upon the page, falling into his notebook with the elegance of the Passaic River. At the University of Pennsylvania, Williams met Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, and Charles Demuth, fellow poets. Although Willie completed his medical training and became a doctor, he continued writing poetry.

At the end of this Caldecott Honor book, there is a biography of William Carlos Williams' life. The author and illustrator provide a personal commentary, giving young readers further insight into the process of creating a book. In these creative illustrations, the poet's famous words merge with his life. Readers will attain a better appreciation for the creative process of being a poet - from the initial idea to the final composition of a poem.

Listen to the Wind: The Story of Dr.
Greg & Three Cups of Tea
by Greg Mortenson and Susan Roth
Illustrations by Susan Roth
(Dial Books for Young Readers, 2009)

In this lovely volume, best-selling author and philanthropist Greg Mortenson (with Susan Roth) shares his story about building schools in Pakistan with a younger audience. The story is told through the voices of children who live in the village of Korphe in Pakistan. The children study at a school which they helped build. Before the school was constructed, the children studied outside and learned to write with sticks.

One day a stranger, Greg Mortenson, stumbles into the village. The villagers serve him tea and food. Mortenson had intended to climb a mountain but lost his way, ending up in Korphe. One day he listens to the wind and realizes the people of Korphe need a school. Greg promises to return and build a school. One year later, Greg Mortenson returns to the village with supplies. Mothers carry the cement. Fathers lay out the stone walls. And the children of Korphe glue the stones together; it takes a village to build a school. When the school is completed, the villagers celebrate.

This book is a brilliant adaptation of Three Cups of Tea, a best-selling book for adults. Young readers will step into a small village in Pakistan through these carefully constructed collages. Susan Roth's illustrations feel three-dimensional and serve as the perfect backdrop to the text. This book is a creative masterpiece that might inspire children to become socially active in their own communities.

Suzanna E. Henshon finished a Ph.D. at William & Mary in 2005 and teaches full-time at Florida Gulf Coast University.

Scheduling in “Me Time” My Creative Journey

by Katherine Mulry

So it's time. It's time to clear some space on my overflowing plate of never ending “To Do Lists” and growing list of goals that I keep written down in the back of my planner. The time is now to forget about planning for the upcoming school year, and preparing for graduate school. I need to focus on my interests, my passions and explore something that I am truly interested in.

This summer, I took a course on “Developing Creative Thinking Skills in Gifted Students” that forced me to do just that. Sitting in our tiny classroom, I felt as though I won the lottery when I learned we would be developing our own creativity by pursuing a personal interest. *Really? Could it be? Just do something that I am interested in? How cool is that!* I was given the golden ticket that I desperately needed – the stamp of approval that it was ok to be a little selfish and solely think of my own interests. My mind promptly started racing through all of the possible things I could pursue. Quickly, I started jotting down a list of ideas in the back of my notebook. Maybe I could strengthen my photography skills, attempt to create my own wheat paste artworks inspired by my favorite artist, Swoon, or finally take the glassblowing class that I have been interested in for years. By the time I got home that evening, I had a lengthy list of possibilities. It struck me that I haven't allowed myself the “treat” of doing things I am interested for a long time.

While sweating in the extreme July heat in my un-air conditioned house, I decided to escape the heat by learning how to make vegan ice cream. I chose vegan ice cream to both learn healthier dessert options and to manage my newly discovered food allergies. Before diving head first into this, I figured it would be best if I tested the water a little first and actually *try* vegan ice cream. My first stop was Lula's Sweet Apothecary, a tiny vegan dessert shop in Manhattan's East Village. Approaching Lula's, I smiled when I saw a long line snaking out of the shop, often the mark of good food. This was the first clue that I was on the right track. Squeezing into the tiny shop, the chalkboard sign of flavors revealed a variety of milk substitutes used in creating the ice cream including, soy and nut bases. In the mood for soft serve, I ordered cashew-based cake batter in a sugar cone. With the first lick, I knew this was the right path for me. Arriving back at my house, I feverishly read blogs, websites and watched videos. During the research phase of my journey, I happily discovered great books about vegan ice creams in my local library.

The next step in my creative journey was Chef Fran Costigan's Vegan Ice Cream class at The Natural Gourmet Institute. Chef Costigan is known for her fabulous desserts and is referred to as “the queen of vegan desserts.” My learning curve for vegan ice cream and new ingredients skyrocketed during this class. Working in small groups, our class made eleven different ice creams, six sauces, coconut milk whip cream, chocolate ganache, gluten-free brownie bites, and gluten-free chocolate cake. The day ended on a sweet note when we got to try all of the delicious flavors. Since then, I have a readily available supply of coconut creamer in my fridge and some homemade Raw Strawberry Avocado Ice Cream in my freezer.

The longer I thought about and researched vegan ice cream, the more creative thoughts I had. Which in turn allowed me to see the joys that my *students* can have when they are able to select an independent project to work on. When students pursue their own creative journey it is essential to provide them with an adequate time to think, plan, process as well as to perform and produce their final products. On my creative journey I realized the importance of sharing my interests and passions with my students. Sharing products that I created may inspire my students to pursue their own personal journey. They too will have the opportunity to share their knowledge and discoveries. This can create a cycle of inspiration and learning where students build upon each other's strengths.

During the past few years, I have become so focused on my career and my personal education that I let some of my personal interests slip to the wayside. One of the most eye opening activities that we did during the Developing Creative Thinking Skills course was to make a list of the 25 things that we were most proud of accomplishing over the past year. I encourage you to create your own list. Then ask yourself if you're satisfied with your list. Is there anything else that you'd like to see on it? Take the time to pursue your own creative journey and explore your interests.

We hold the power to choose what we want to focus on, and the paths that we take. There's always time.

Katherine Mulry teaches first grade in a gifted and talented school in Manhattan's Lower East Side. Katherine graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Childhood Education with a concentration in Art History from SUNY New Paltz. She is currently pursuing a gifted and talented extension and a Master's degree in literacy.

CPC: Eradication of Creativity Disorder Nears

by Barbara Kerr

The Center for the Prevention of Creativity (CPC)'s Secretary General Barbara Kerr, Ph.D., announced today that the scourge of Creativity Disorder has been contained in most regions of the United States, and estimates that by the end of the decade, it will be eliminated entirely. Creativity Disorder has been endemic in the US population since the birth of the nation, with Thomas Jefferson being one of the earliest and most infamous victims of the plague. With no known cures and only the most primitive treatments, Creativity Disorder was rampant throughout the nineteenth century. The disease was fatal often, inducing madness and suicide in some victims, and starvation in others, including those living in unsanitary ateliers. For the most part, however, people simply suffered silently and bravely the long-term consequences of its well-known side effects, Art, Music, Invention, and Literature. The twentieth century saw worldwide outbreaks of Creativity Disorder, but the disease claimed a high proportion of its victims in the United States, where misguided policies such as the New Deal programs that actually encouraged artists, writers, and musicians, the G. I. Bill that provoked the kind of advanced education that hones the disease's power, and the National Defense Education Act, that in the wake of Sputnik, unleashed a generation of inventors and scientists who mentored other individuals into creativity disorder. Epidemics in New York City, San Francisco, Silicon Valley, and Seattle led to social problems that ranged from internet dating to punk rock. Hope for the eradication of Creativity Disorder only arose at the end of the twentieth century, when it was realized that a cure involved a cocktail of developmental, social, educational, and medical interventions. In the realm of developmental interventions, agricultural leaders discovered that a diet of corn sweeteners, highly processed food products, and artificial flavors could effectively reduce the growth of the kind of brain cells required to nourish creativity. An added benefit of the application of this diet to both pre-natal and post-natal development is decreased mobility, so that potential victims move more slowly and deliberately. Social innovations such as mandatory daily after school and weekend activities, and rise of competitive parenting, insured that children with latent forms of Creativity Disorder would be kept so busy that they are unlikely to ever manifest the disease. It was finally recognized that the most common approach to any disease, isolation, was actually counterproductive, as millions of disappointed parents discovered that their child in solitary confinement had somehow discovered a pencil and paper, or worse, had taken to disassembling and re-assembling everything from alarm clocks to lawnmowers. Grouping children with their age peers (rather than intellectual peers) in co-operative learning groups seems to

be one of the only sure preventative approaches. It was in educational policy, however, that a truly nationwide war against creativity was battled on all fronts. No Child Left Behind was a gift to every miserable parent of a creative child, because its wise emphasis on drill and test scores in the basics led to reductions in art, music, creative writing, and advanced math and science. Programs for gifted students were carefully stamped out, because even though intelligence does not always lead to creativity, it does seem to lay the groundwork for the disease. To be absolutely certain that nobody, anywhere, might receive government funding for research into creativity, (where it might be accidentally released from the laboratory) the word was expunged from grant solicitations in the Department of Education, the National Science Foundation, and even the National Institutes of Health. Because you can't be too careful, DOE grant solicitations made it clear that it would not fund research for highly able students unless there were benefits for students who were clearly free of all symptoms of Creativity Disorder. Even in the sterile environment of No Child Left Behind Schools, homes that are carefully cleansed of books, instruments, and technology, and an economy of service workers, occasionally Creativity can somehow emerge. In these unusual cases, pharmaceutical companies and psychologists have developed third and fourth generation drugs and psychological interventions that can usually alleviate the symptoms of the disease. Although paradoxically, moderate doses of anti-depressants, ADHD medications and anti-psychotics can actually increase the disorder by calming an individual enough to engage in creative activities, it has been found that at very high doses, the progress of the disorder can be halted. Finally, it has been found that certain psychotherapies, in addition to medication, offer long-term relief. Because creativity disorder is mostly active in those parts of the brain that are implicated in intuition, imagination, and aha! experiences, it has been shown that Cognitive Behavior Therapy can tip the balance by encouraging rationality, reasonable goal-setting, and plodding effort. This column will continue in the next installments to document the progress in the eradication of Creativity Disorder. In addition, helpful information concerning the establishment of creativity-free households, schools, and communities will be presented to the public. With these efforts, it may be possible to have, at last, a generation of youth who are able to grow up entirely free of creativity and its side effects, and prepared for useful, practical work in today's global, free market economy.

Dr. Barbara Kerr is the Williamson Family Distinguished Professor of Counseling Psychology at the University of Kansas. Her research specialties are the psychology of optimal human development, including giftedness, creativity, and spirituality; counseling and psychotherapy; and gender issues. She is the author of "Smart Girls: A New Psychology of Girls, Women, and Giftedness", and co-author of "Smart Boys: Talent, Manhood, and the Search for Meaning".

Stepping Down

*A Farewell from the Past Chair
of the Creativity Network*

Great thanks to all the wonderful, creative individuals who shared their energy, expertise, knowledge, experience and wisdom with me and the network over the last two years.

I would also like to thank all of you, who, as members of the Creativity Network, support our important work. Your membership matters. I urge each of you to continue your annual donation to the Network, and ask you to look for ways to contribute to the network's activities. Each of you has something important to share with the rest of us. Please consider writing a piece for our newsletter or making a presentation at next year's conference. Join us for the fun and fellowship of Creativity Night and consider adding your voice to Network activities during this year's convention in Atlanta (see the listing of Network events and meetings in the conference program).

Please join me in welcoming our new Network Chair, Wendy Leader, and Chair Elect Laurie Abeel. Both Wendy and Laurie have many years experience in the Creativity Network and both bring a wealth of energy and enthusiasm to the Network. Please seek them out in Atlanta, introduce yourself, share your thoughts and ideas and become a part of shaping the Network and its activities.

With warm thanks,
NAN HATHAWAY

Contact Celebrate Creativity!

If you have a potential article, book review, lesson plan, or other creative idea that you think you'd like to submit for our next newsletter, please contact us.

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NAGC Convention Creativity Network Events

Thursday, November 11 – 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Network Social, Exhibit Hall

Join us for the opening of the Exhibit Hall! Enjoy snacks and get to know the people in Creativity Network.

Friday, November 12, 8:50-10:20 a.m.

NAGC Mini-Keynote: Creativity, Imagination, and Innovation - The New World Order

Room: Georgia Ballroom 2 **Presenters:** Mark Runco, Robert Root-Bernstein, Sandra Russ

Friday, November 12 – 10:40-11:40 a.m.

NAGC Signature Series: Creativity Follow-Up Panel (Presenter 1) Room: C204 Presenter: Mark Runco & Creativity Follow-Up Panel (Presenter 2) Room: C101 Presenter: Sandra Ruff

Dr. Mark Runco and Dr. Sandra Ruff will continue the discussion of creativity, innovation and imagination from the mini-keynote session, with a focus on how to promote these in children in the contexts of home and school.

Friday, November 12, 7:30-9:15 p.m.

Creativity Night – Creativity On My Mind Omni Hotel

Just like the jazz song, "Georgia on My Mind," great ideas and innovations linger in our memories. Come and exercise the creative side of your mind. Experience interactive presentations and hands-on activities designed for you to apply with every student in every content area. Unlock your students' creative potential through innovative instruction and student activities inspired by tonight's presenters. Ratchet up your own creativity at this high-energy event and return to the classroom bursting with ideas for inspiring your students to lead the way!

Saturday, November 13, 1:15-2:15 p.m.

Creativity Network Business Meeting

Room: Georgia World Congress Center Building C, First Floor, C104

Saturday, November 13, 5:00-6:30 p.m.

NAGC presents the E. Paul Torrance Lecture:

The Gifted Empire Strikes Back: What Role does Gifted Education Play in the 21st Century?

Room: Georgia Ballroom **Presenter:** Joseph S. Renzulli

Sunday, November 14, 7:30-8:30 a.m.

Sunday Super Session: Nurturing Creativity in Young Gifted

Children Room: C201 Presenters: Susan Daniels, Associate Professor, California State University - San Bernardino; Dan Peters, Psychologist, Summit Center

Sunday, November 14, 8:45-9:45 a.m.

Sunday Super Session:

Essential Partners for Teaching 21st Century Skills: Creative Teaching and Teaching Creativity

Room: C201 Presenter: Susan Keller-Mathers, Associate Professor, International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State

& over 36 additional concurrent sessions!